

and vastly increase the complexity of compliance with the income tax law; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly and Senate of the State of California, jointly, That California respectfully urges the Congress of the United States to index the AMT exemption and tax brackets for inflation; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the President and the Vice President of the United States, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Senate Majority Leader, the Senate Minority Leader, the House Majority Leader, the House Minority Leader, the Chair and ranking minority member of the Senate Finance Committee, the Chair and ranking minority member of the House Committee on Ways and Means, and each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second time by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. DASCHLE (for himself, Mr. MOYNIHAN, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. KERRY, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. BINGAMAN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. REID, Mr. KERREY, Mr. TORRICELLI, Mr. CLELAND, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. REED, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. BREAUX, Mr. DODD, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. WELLSTONE, Mr. BRYAN, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. BYRD, Mr. HARKIN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. LINCOLN, Mr. ROBB, and Mr. INOUE):

S. 1678. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to modify the provisions of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BIDEN (for himself, Mr. KERRY, and Ms. MIKULSKI):

S. 1679. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to implement enforcement of the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. ASHCROFT (for himself and Mr. FEINGOLD):

S. 1680. A bill to provide for the improvement of the processing of claims for veterans compensation and pensions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans Affairs.

By Mr. CRAIG:

S. 1681. A bill to extend the authority of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association to establish a memorial to Thomas Paine in the District of Columbia; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mr. ROCKEFELLER (for himself and Mr. GORTON):

S. 1682. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to authorize management reforms of the Federal Aviation Administration, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. LOTT:

S. Res. 194. A resolution expressing sympathy for the victims of the devastating earthquake that struck Taiwan on September 21, 1999; considered and agreed to.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTION

By Mr. BIDEN (for himself and Mr. KERRY):

S. 1679. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to implement enforcement of the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1988; to the Committee on Finance.

BREAST RECONSTRUCTION IMPLEMENTATION ACT OF 1999

• Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I am pleased to introduce the Breast Reconstruction Implementation Act of 1999. This bill amends the Internal Revenue Code to require that all health plans provide coverage for breast reconstruction surgery after a woman has had a mastectomy for breast cancer.

Breast cancer is a frightening disease for women. It is common: a very high percentage of women who live long enough will eventually develop the disease. It is insidious: it can remain asymptomatic for many years before it is discovered. It is stealthy: it can recur many years after it has been thought to be cured. It is devastating: surgical treatment can be not only physically mutilating but psychologically devastating to a woman's sense of femininity and self-esteem. And it is everywhere: there is hardly anyone in this country who does not have a close friend or loved one who has been through an experience with breast cancer.

Fortunately, there has been tremendous progress in the treatment of breast cancer, and many women can now be cured. However, as these breast cancer survivors attempt to resume their normal lives after their treatment, they can still be impacted by the physical damage that follows mastectomy. Breast reconstruction surgery after mastectomy is thus a key part of restoring the breast cancer patient back to a satisfying and fulfilling life; it is not simply a cosmetic procedure to satisfy one's vanity.

In recognition of the importance of breast reconstruction after mastectomy, last year the Senate passed the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act as part of the Omnibus Appropriations Bill. This legislation, which was signed into law by the President, amended the Public Health Service Act and the Employee Retirement Income Security Act to require that health plans provide coverage for breast reconstruction after mastectomy. This coverage also includes surgery on the unoperated breast, if necessary, as well as the cost of breast prostheses and repair to physical complications following mastectomy (e.g. lymphedema or arm swelling).

However, if we don't pass further legislation, the enforcement mechanisms available to the Department of Labor to ensure that health plans comply with the breast reconstruction requirement are generally limited to requesting a court to issue an injunction. The Breast Reconstruction Implementation Act will incorporate the breast recon-

struction requirement into the Internal Revenue Code in order to enable civil monetary penalties to be imposed on violators of the law. Passage of this bill would continue the precedent established by all previous mandates on health plans (those in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, the Newborns' and Mothers' Health Protection Act, and the Mental Health Parity Act), which were incorporated into all three statutes: Public Health Service Act, Employee Retirement Income Security Act, and the Internal Revenue Code.

Mr. President, I encourage my colleagues to finish the work that we began last year to ensure that women can be fully restored to health after fighting breast cancer, and I urge them to support the Breast Reconstruction Implementation Act of 1999 that I am introducing today. •

By Mr. ASHCROFT (for himself and Mr. FEINGOLD):

S. 1680. A bill to provide for the improvement of the processing of claims for veterans compensation and pensions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans Affairs.

VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1999

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 1680

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Veterans Benefits Administration Improvement Act of 1999".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The Veterans Benefits Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs is responsible for the timely and accurate processing of claims for veterans compensation and pension.

(2) The accuracy of claims processing within the Veterans Benefits Administration has been a subject of concern to Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(3) While the Veterans Benefits Administration has reported in the past a 95 percent accuracy rate in processing claims, a new accuracy measurement system known as the Systematic Technical Accuracy Review found that, in 1998, initial review of veterans claims was accurate only 64 percent of the time.

(4) The Veterans Benefits Administration could lose up to 30 percent of its workforce to retirement by 2003, making adequate training for claims adjudicators even more necessary to ensure veterans claims are processed efficiently.

(5) The Veterans Benefits Administration needs to take more aggressive steps to ensure that veterans claims are processed in an accurate and timely fashion to avoid unnecessary delays in providing veterans with compensation and pension benefits.

SEC. 3. IMPROVEMENT OF PROCESSING OF VETERANS BENEFITS CLAIMS.

(a) PLAN REQUIRED.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,